

Message Text

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11

ACTION EA-14

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R 140210Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2643

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 3358

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, MILI, VS

SUBJECT: ELEVEN GENERALS RETIRED; NEW CHIEF OF STAFF NAMED

1. SUMMARY. IN ANOTHER STEP TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL UNITY, PRESIDENT THIEU HAS ORDERED THE RETIREMENT OF ELEVEN GENERALS FROM RVNAF. ALL OF THEM HAVE BEEN IN POLITICAL OR MILITARY ECLIPSE OR IN BAD HEALTH, SO THEIR RETIREMENT IS NOT OF GREAT MOMENT. THE MOST IMPORTANT SHIFT IS THAT OF RVNAF LOGISTICS CHIEF LTG DONG VAN KHUYEN, WHO HAS BEEN MADE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF (JGS). KHUYEN IS WELL REGARDED BY DAO OFFICERS WHO HAVE WORKED CLOSELY WITH HIM. HE REPLACES LTG NGUYEN VAN MANH WHO WILL BE ASSISTANT CHIEF FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. IN A FURTHER STEP TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL UNITY, PRESIDENT THIEU HAS ORDERED THE RETIREMENT OF ELEVEN RVNAF GENERALS,
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ACCORDING TO THE DEFENSE MINISTRY'S PRESS OFFICER, THE PRESIDENT

SIGNED THE RETIREMENT ORDERS ON MARCH 6.

3. A LIST OF THE ELEVEN GENERALS FOLLOWS. NOTES HAVE BEEN ADDED BY THE EMBASSY. INDIVIDUAL RETIREMENT DATES ARE LISTED IN PARENTHESES

A. LTG NGUYEN VAN LA. LA HAS BEEN ASSISTANT TO THE CHIEF OF JGS FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT. LONG PAST HIS PRIME, LA HAS NOT BEEN AN IMPORTANT INFLUENCE IN RVNAF FOR MANY YEARS. HIS REPUTATION HAS NOT BEEN HELPED BY THE BUSINESS ACTIVITIES OF HIS WIFE WHO WAS CONVICTED OF PASSING BAD CHECKS. (RETIRE MARCH 31.)

B. LTG HOANG XUAN LAM. COMMANDER OF I CORPS FROM 1966 TO 1972 AND ONCE MENTIONED AS A POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR TO GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN AS CHIEF OF JGS, LAM HAD HIS REPUTATION AS A MILITARY COMMANDER TARNISHED BY THE LOSS OF QUANG TRI PROVINCE DURING THE 1972 COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE. HE WAS RELIEVED OF HIS I CORPS COMMAND AND MADE AN ASSISTANT TO THE DEFENSE MINISTER, A JOB OF NO REAL IMPORTANCE. LAM HAS ALSO BEEN SERVING ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S ANTI-CORRUPTION AND DRUG ABUSE COMMITTEE. (RETIRE MARCH 31.)

C. LTG TRAN NGOC TAM. TAM HAS BEEN AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND SINCE JULY 1972. HE HAS PERFORMED POORLY AS AMBASSADOR, ACCORDING TO EMBASSY BANGKOK. HE DROPPED OUT OF THE MAINSTREAM OF RVNAF POLITICS IN 1964 (WHEN HE WAS III CORP COMMANDER). FROM 1965 UNTIL 1972 TAM WAS CHIEF OF THE FREE WORLD MILITARY ASSISTANCE FORCES WORKING COMMITTEE. (RETIRE APRIL 30.)

D. LTG NGUYEN VAN VY. VY HAS BEEN WITHOUT AN ASSIGNMENT SINCE APRIL 1972 WHEN HE WAS RELIEVED AS DEFENSE MINISTER FOLLOWING OFFICIAL DISCLOSURES OF HIS INVOLVEMENT IN IRREGULAR PRACTICES RELATING TO THE CONTROVERSIAL MILITARY SAVINGS FUND (SINCE DISBANDED)

VY, BORN IN 1916, IS CURRENTLY THE OLDEST GENERAL OFFICER ON ACTIVE DUTY. (RETIRE MARCH 31.)

E. LTG TRAN VAN ("LITTLE") MINH. NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH VNAF COMMANDER LTG TRAN VAN MINH, MINH LOST OUT IN THE TOP-LEVEL RVNAF REALIGNMENTS OF THE MID-1960'S. HE HAS BEEN AMBASSADOR TO TUNISIA SINCE EARLY 1967. IN MID-1973, MINH TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER IN TUNIS (ALSO ON TDY IN VIET NAM AT THE TIME) THAT HIS PLANS FOR THE FUTURE DID NOT INCLUDE RESIDENCE IN VIET NAM. (RETIRE APRIL 30.)

F. LTG LING QUANG VIEN. VIEN SERVED AS COMMISSIONER FOR NATIONAL SECURITY UNDER MG NGUYEN CAO RY IN 1965-66. HE WAS INTERIOR
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MINISTER IN THE 1967-68 LOC CABINET. SINCE THAT TIME, VIEN, A NORTHERNER IDENTIFIED WITH FORMER VICE PRESIDENT KY, HAS NOT HELD A SIGNIFICANT POSITION. MOST RECENTLY, HE HAS BEEN A SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE. (RETIRE APRIL 30.)

G. LTG NGO DZU. AT THE TIME OF THE 1972 COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE, DZU WAS COMMANDER OF II CORPS. HE PROVED UNEQUAL TO THE SITUATION AND WAS REMOVED FROM COMMAND AFTER COMMUNIST FORCES BATTERED THE ARVN 22ND DIVISION IN KONTUM AND BINH DINH. DZU HAS SERVED AS A

SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE DEFENSE MINISTER SINCE THAT TIME.

(RETIRES MAY 31.)

H. MG NGUYEN VAN KIEM. A LONG-TIME FRIEND OF PRESIDENT THIEU AND CHIEF OF MILITARY CABINET AT THE PRESIDENCY, KIEM WAS BADLY INJURED IN A TERRORIST ATTEMPT ON HIS LIFE IN 1969. HE IS NOT KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN PLAYING AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE PRESIDENCY OR RVNAF.

(RETIRES MAY 31.)

I. BG NGUYEN THANH HOANG. INSPECTOR GENERAL (IG) OF II CORPS SINCE NOVEMBER 1973, HOANG WAS PREVIOUSLY DEPUTY COMMANDER OF IV CORPS. HE COMMANDED THE 7TH DIVISION FROM 1968 TO 1970. HIS DIVISION DID NOT PERFORM WELL IN THE LAST PHASE OF THE REDUCTION OF US TROOP PRESENCE IN THE DELTA. APPARENTLY, HIS PERFORMANCE AS DEPUTY IV CORPS CG DID NOT IMPRESS HIS SUPERIOR, MG NGUYEN VINH NGHI.

(RETIRES MAY 31.)

J. BG NGUYEN HUU HANH. IG OF I CORPS SINCE NOVEMBER 1973, HANH WAS BEFORE THAH HOSPITALIZED FOR MANY MONTHS FOR TREATMENT OF TUBERCULOSIS. HANH WAS AT ONE TIME DEPUTY MR 4 COMMANDER. (RETIRES MAY 31.)

K. MG DOAN VAN QUANG. NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH PRESIDENTIAL SPECIAL ASSISTANT LTG DANG VAN QUANG, QUANG HEADED THE VIETNAMESE SPECIAL FORCES FROM 1964 TO 1969. IN JUNE 1972 QUANG WAS MADE COMMANDER OF THE IMPORTANT QUANG TRUNG TRAINING CENTER JUST OUTSIDE OF SAIGON. HE WAS RELIEVED OF COMMAND IN AUGUST 1973 AFTER A NUMBER OF APPARENTLY WELL FOUNDED CHARGES OF CORRUPTION WERE LODGED AGAINST HIM. QUANG HAS BEEN UNASSIGNED SINCE THAT TIME. (RETIRES MARCH 31.)

4. ALL ELEVEN OF THE GENERALS TO BE RETIRED HAVE EITHER BEEN IN POLITICAL OR MILITARY ECLIPSE OR HAVE SUFFERED FROM BAD HEALTH. IT IS NOT LIKELY THAT THEIR RETIREMENT WILL STIR MUCH INTEREST. YOUNGER OFFICERS AND KNOWLEDGEABLE VIETNAMESE OUTSIDE OF RVNAF WILL PROBABLY CONSIDER IT A USEFUL MEASURE AIMED AT REMOVING DEADWOOD FROM GENERAL OFFICER RANKS. WHEN THE RETIREMENTS OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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ELEVEN GENERALS TAKE EFFECT, THE NUMBER OF ACTIVE DUTY RVNAF GENERAL OFFICERS WILL HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO 83.

5. THE FUTURE STATUS OF LTG TAM, THE AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND, IS NOT IMMEDIATELY CLEAR. HOWEVER, THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS THAT HE WILL LEAVE HIS POST. IN THE CASE OF LTG MINH, CURRENTLY AMBASSADOR TO TUNISIA, THE USUALLY AUTHORITATIVE NEWSPAPER DAN CHU, ORGAN OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S DEMOCRACY PARTY, CLAIMED IN A MARCH 7 ARTICLE THAT PRESIDENT THIEU HAS SUBMITTED MINH'S NAME TO THE SENATE FOR APPROVAL AS THE RVN'S FIRST AMBASSADOR TO SAUDI ARABIA. ACCORDING TO THE DAN CHU ARTICLE, THIEU HAS RECOMMENDED PRESIDENTIAL SPECIAL ASSISTANT TRAN VAN AN, NOW SERVING WITH THE RVN DELEGATION TO THE PARIS BILATERALS, TO THE SENATE AS MINH'S REPLACEMENT IN TUNIS. ANOTHER AMBASSADORIAL NOMINEE ON THE DAN CHU LIST IS RETIRING LTG LINH QUANG VIEN WHO WOULD REPORTEDLY BECOME AMBASSADOR TO THE

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC IF APPROVED BY THE SENATE.

6. LTG DONG VAN KHUYEN, CHIEF OF THE CENTRAL LOGISTICS COMMAND (CLC), HAS BEEN NAMED CHIEF OF STAFF OF JGS. HE WILL REMAIN CHIEF OF THE CLC. KHUYEN HAS REPLACED LTG NGUYEN VAN MANH WHO WILL STEP DOWN TO BECOME ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT (REPLACING LTG LA, WHO IS RETIRING). KHUYEN IS A PROTEGE OF GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN, CHIEF OF JGS, AND THE TWO OFFICERS SHOULD WORK WELL TOGETHER. HE IS WELL REGARDED BY DAO OFFICERS WHO HAVE WORKED CLOSELY WITH HIM.

7. BG PHAM HA THANH, CURRENTLY CHIEF OF THE CONG HOA MILITARY HOSPITAL, HAS SUCCEEDED MG VU NGOC HOAN AS RVNAF SURGEON GENERAL. HOAN SERVED AS SURGEON GENERAL FROM 1965 UNTIL HIS RECENT REPLACEMENT. HOAN HAS BEEN SEVERELY CRITICIZED BY THE NEW JGS CHIEF OF STAFF KHUYEN FOR ALLEGEDLY SPENDING MORE TIME ON HIS PRIVATE MEDICAL PRACTICE IN SAIGON THAN ON HIS OFFICIAL DUTIES. THANH, ON THE OTHER HAND, REPORTEDLY GETS ALONG WELL WITH KHUYEN. AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. THANH IS ALSO RETAINING COMMAND OF THE CONG HOA MILITARY HOSPITAL, VIETNAM'S BEST EQUIPPED AND STAFFED MEDICAL INSTITUTION.

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